

Chapter 5

The Army's Families

Families have always played an important role within the United States Army. One of the first acknowledgments by the Army leadership is found in a letter written in 1889 contained in the archives at Fort Richardson, Nebraska. The letter states that the expulsion of families from military reservations would cause hardship and suffering for the families and also discontent among the

married soldiers. It goes on to say that marriage undoubtedly increased the steadfastness and reliability of the soldier. At that time, according to the writer, it was a very rare occurrence for the married man to desert, and married soldiers lost fewer days from sickness than their single comrades did.

Today this is still true. Units, servicemembers and families are parts of a complex system in which each part affects the well-being of the others. Unit readiness is impacted by

soldier readiness. Soldier readiness is impacted by family readiness. By not allowing family issues to become a distraction, the Army family allows the soldier to focus on the mission.

The majority of Army families are capable of taking care of themselves and are not a drain on the unit when provided with the appropriate information. They often step in when other, less capable families experience problems and are unable to cope. This provides a very important

service to the Army by augmenting not only the unit's readiness but also the entire Army's by contributing to the retention of trained, experienced soldiers.

The military community depends heavily on volunteers. Through the dedication of soldier and family member volunteers, the Army is able to provide many of the programs and services that support and enhance the well-being of soldiers and families and contribute greatly to unit readiness.

Data shows that soldier and unit readiness is affected by soldiers' feelings about the way the Army leadership supports them and their families. Informed leaders realize reenlistment decisions are made within the context of the family. High-performing soldiers are most likely to stay in the Army when they believe the quality of life for their spouses and children compares favorably to the quality of life they would experience in civilian life.

Today's Army leadership believes in building strong families by offering them training programs to expand their knowledge of resources and benefits. This cost-effective way of enhancing Army readiness contributes to more confident, satisfied soldiers and families.

The following is a list of some of the programs offered through the Department of the Army and the Department of Defense. Most of these programs are available on the installation.

Department of the Army Family Programs

Army Community Service (ACS) Centers are located on each Army installation and give personal help and support to the Army Community

Did you know?

Active Duty

61% of all soldiers are married.

7% of all active-duty soldiers are married to other servicemembers.

Army National Guard

74% of officers and 50.3% of enlisted soldiers in the ARNG are married.

Overall, 52.2% of the ARNG force is married.

Army Reserve

71% of officers and 40% of enlisted USAR soldiers are married.

Overall, 47% of the USAR force is married.

to resolve problems. The centers offer a variety of programs and services as well as volunteer opportunities. The programs listed below are available at the installation Army Community Service Center.

★ **Family Advocacy Program** is dedicated to the prevention, education, prompt reporting, investigation, intervention and treatment of spouse and child abuse. The program provides a variety of services to soldiers and families to enhance their relationship skills and improve quality of life. This is accomplished through a variety of counseling and intervention services as well as seminars and workshops. The program is available on installations; information may be obtained from either the Army Community Service Center or the installation medical facility.

★ **Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)** is a mandatory enrollment program that works with other military and civilian agencies to provide comprehensive and coordinated community support, housing, educational, medical and personnel services to families with special-needs members. An active duty soldier must enroll in this program if he or she has a family member with a physical, emotional, developmental or intellectual disorder requiring specialized services so that those needs can be considered in the military personnel assignment process. The family member must go through a screening process prior to enrollment. The servicemember is responsible for updating the EFMP enrollment as the exceptional family member's condition changes or every three years, whichever comes first. This program may also be available through the installation medical facility.

★ **Relocation Assistance Program** provides services necessary to support military personnel and their families as they relocate. The services are provided through the installation

Army Community Service Center and consist of educational briefings, orientations and workshops about premove preparation, overseas tours, cross-cultural training and destination services. The following are considered relocation services:

- outreach, advocacy and counseling for waiting families;
- loan of household items for a limited period while families are awaiting arrival of their belongings;
- training unit's sponsorship program trainers and/or sponsors;
- Standard Installation Topic Exchange Service (SITES), an automated system that provides a wide range of information on all major military installations worldwide.

★ **Family Member Employment Assistance Program (FMEAP)** provides information, workshops and referral services (in the areas of employment, education, training, transition and volunteer opportunities to minimize employment problems associated with military moves) to family members who are relocating as a result of a sponsor's permanent change of station (PCS).

★ **Consumer Affairs and Financial Assistance Program (CAFAP)** offers a wide range of services to assist soldiers and their families with money management, proper use of credit, insurance and financial planning. Also included in this program is a debt liquidation service to help soldiers arrange to pay off outstanding debt and work with creditors to gain stable and manageable financial positions. The Consumer Affairs program educates soldiers on their rights as consumers to prevent others from taking advantage of them.

★ **Army Family Action Plan (AFAP)** is a program that allows communication from soldiers, family members and retirees to the

Army leadership. It alerts commanders to areas of concern that require their attention and gives them an opportunity to quickly put plans into place to work toward resolving the issues. Each Army installation is required to have an annual symposium during which volunteers representing active duty personnel, family members and retirees from all components of the Army meet to surface problems that exist on the installation. These delegates then brainstorm solutions for the problem issues.

This information is then briefed to the NCO and officer leadership, and they decide whether the issues and solutions are installation-based or if they must be elevated to the MACOM or even DA level. Those issues that are sent on to DA are then briefed at the semiannual national AFAP Conference. AFAP results in legislation, policies, programs and services that strengthen readiness, retention and the well-being of soldiers and families—active, reserve component and retirees.

- ★ **Army Emergency Relief (AER)** is the Army's own emergency financial assistance organization. AER funds provide emergency assistance to soldiers, active and retired, and their family members when there is a valid need. AER also provides scholarships and spouse education assistance overseas.
- ★ **Army Family Team Building (AFTB)** is a three-level program developed and led by volunteers and designed to provide the training and knowledge to spouses and family members to empower them in meeting the challenges of Army life. Information on this program can be found at the installation Army Community Service Center. AFTB started as an Army family program but has now been adapted for other services and has also been translated into several foreign languages.

Department of Defense Military Child Development System

The Department of Defense military child development system provides services for more than 1.2 million children under the age of 18. The Office of Children and Youth within the Office of the Secretary of Defense is responsible for the overall policy for child development programs. Each of the military services and Defense agencies issues regulations based on this policy. Fees for these programs are subsidized by the government and are determined on a sliding scale based on rank and total income; costs are shared 50/50 between parents and the government. Child development programs are available on each installation and consist of four main components:

- ★ **Child Development Centers (CDC).** Care is provided for children between the ages of six weeks and 12 years. The centers usually operate between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. More than 95 percent of the centers are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
- ★ **Family Child Care (FCC)** provides in-home care by certified providers who have undergone rigorous background checks. Historically, providers were required to live on the installation or in government-leased housing, but recently several of the services, to include the Army, have expanded their programs to include military families living in civilian housing as providers. These homes provide child care for servicemembers on shift work and are also able to take in mildly ill children, something CDCs cannot do.
- ★ **School-age Care (SAC)** offers programs for children ages 6–12 before and after school, and during holidays and summer vacations. The care is provided in CDCs, youth centers and other suitable facilities. There are also some initiatives that partner with local schools and off-base organizations.

- ★ **Resource and Referral (R&R)** provides local resource and referral services to assist parents in finding child care when all on-base spaces are filled or care cannot be obtained through military-provided services. R&R services work closely with community services at the local level to serve as a liaison to non-military child care services.
- ★ **New Parent Support Program (NPSP)** offers family-focused services on a voluntary basis to first-time and other interested parents to promote healthy and successful parenting and families. The program's emphases are education, support services and infant care and bonding. A number of workshops as well as referrals to other local community agencies are offered through this program.
- ★ **Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR)** consists of a series of programs benefiting soldiers and family members, active duty and retired. These include outdoor recreation programs and centers; Army Lodging; libraries; arts and crafts centers; golf courses; self-help automotive centers; and the Army and Air Force Exchange Service stores (AAFES).

Additional Information About Programs for Army Families

The information listed above is only a representative sampling of the many programs available to soldiers and families. For more information on these and other programs, check the following websites:

Health care

<http://www.tricare.osd.mil/> – TRICARE information including: beneficiary information; benefit changes; provider lists; catchment areas; pharmacy formulary; fact sheets; claims forms and instructions; Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Overseas.
<http://mfrc.calib.com/snn/index.cfm> – Special-Needs Network

Family Assistance

<http://dticaw.dtic.mil/prhome/commprog.html> – A comprehensive listing of DoD family support program sites including social services, Army Family Team Building (AFTB), recreation, education, etc.
<http://mfrc.calib.com> – Military Family Resource Center
<http://child.cornell.edu/army/fap.html> – Army Family Advocacy Program (AFAP)
<http://www.hqda.army.mil/acsimweb/family/family.htm> – Army Family Liaison Office (FLO)
<http://www.aerhq.org> – Army Emergency Relief (AER)
<http://www.asymca.org> – Armed Services YMCA
<http://www.taps.org> – Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)

Military Entitlements

<http://www.aafes.com> – Army Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) information and online catalog
<http://commissaries.com> – Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA)

Relocation

<http://www.mtmc.army.mil/property/relatedlinks.htm> – Information on military moves and other related sites
http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/swg/owa/webguard.prc_TOCPPOST – Worldwide relocation information (SITES) on major military installations for permanent-change-of-station (PCS) moves

Education

<http://www.militarychild.org> – Military Child Education Coalition
<http://www.odedodea.edu> – Department of Defense Education activity